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## **Abstract**

We were in the throes of a superhero summer—a new movie every weekend: Batman! Superman! Spider-Man! Iron Man! Ant-Man! Aquaman!—when Jesus came back and suddenly the X-Men were real...

## **Cover Page Footnote**

"Do Evil That Good May Come" was originally published at [Booth](#).



# BOOTH



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## Do Evil That Good May Come

Fiction by Jason Jordan

We were in the throes of a superhero summer—a new movie every weekend: Batman! Superman! Spider-Man! Iron Man! Ant-Man! Aquaman!—when Jesus came back and suddenly the X-Men were real. We don't mean that literally, that out of nowhere Professor X and Wolverine and Magneto and the lot of them showed up, but that He gave His followers powers in what became known as the Bestowment. How we heard was we were sitting on the couch watching *The Big Bang Theory* on mute—a show whose dialogue we couldn't stand but whose use of comics pleased us to the nth degree—when Jesus popped up on the screen. We unmuted the TV, waiting for Him to speak. At first we weren't sure if He was actually Him, or if someone was messing with us by committing what's called broadcast signal intrusion, or video hacking for the layman. The production values were high, though, so we figured it was legit.

Do not think that I came to bring peace on Earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword, He said. Matthew 10:34. And we turned to each other and said, almost simultaneously, Cloud Strife's Buster Sword from *Final Fantasy VII*! We envisioned Jesus wielding such a huge sword, mowing down sinners left and right, the sword bigger than He was. But Jesus evidently meant a metaphorical sword, or, we hoped, He was going to produce it out of nowhere. Well done, good and faithful servants.

You have been faithful over a few things; I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord. Matthew 25:23. And He waved His hand as if He was doing a Jedi mind trick or waxing on like Daniel-san, and hence the Bestowment and hence powers granted to His, as Stan Lee would say, “true believers,” and hence the murder rate ascended toward Heaven and hence Hell on Earth.

Jesus’s transmission ended, and we were befuddled because we didn’t yet know what He had done. Instantaneously, the world was awash in speculation. We flipped through the channels, each one featuring news anchors and panels discussing the broadcast, its validity or lack thereof, and some people they interviewed said their TVs hadn’t even been on, that Jesus had appeared like a hologram (we picture the R2-D2/Leia/Luke/Obi-Wan scene) and delivered His lines. They didn’t dwell on that stuff too long, because a few minutes later they cut to a Purging, a term some tweeter coined, during which His devout followers exhibited powers or gifts that might as well’ve been lifted from the pages of *X-Men*. They cut to a fire-breathing man who entered a mall and roasted everything and everyone in sight, except for the news crew, whom, we guessed, he spared so they could document the carnage (not *that* Carnage, though appropriate to think of him) so the rest of us would know what was in store. We looked at each other, wide-eyed, afraid, to be quite honest, and wished we had someone like the Man of Steel to call. He’d deal with them. But we agreed that Superman was too powerful for his own good anyway.

Another channel focused on a colossal brute, a Goliath or Hercules, flipping over cars and yelling. Each vein in his body bulged as if it wanted to burst—Bane meets the Hulk meets the Thing, but not quite as intimidating as any of them. Unlike the fire breather, once he noticed the film crew, he picked up a red truck and chucked it at them, and the screen went black. And yet another channel showed a woman in front of an apartment complex—not ours, thank the Lord—stretching out her arm as if she was offering a hand to the building itself, but the structure began to sway and topple and tumble, eventually becoming a pile of rubble.

It was about this time that we agreed we’d seen enough, so we turned off our eighty-four-inch Sony Bravia 3D HDTV and listened to the crackling static of the surround-sound speakers. We surveyed our walls and ceiling, plastered with posters of Captain America, Black Widow, the Punisher, Black Cat, Hawkeye, Black Panther, Silver Surfer, *ad nauseam*. What would they do in a situation like this? They’d be prepared, for one, and what’s more, they’d go on the offensive. We turned the speakers off, killing the static, headed outside, and locked our apartment.

On our porch, we saw that the clouds were black, ominous, and that soon, even with several hours of daylight left, we would need to turn on lights to see. The wind laid into us immediately, spiraling and juking and hitting us from every direction, which,

we assumed, was the work of someone nearby who could control the weather or, at the very least, the wind itself. After quick deliberation, we decided that it was in our best interest to first arm ourselves at the hardware store down the street. We took the stairs down the hill from our complex to the street, where we saw cars speeding by, ignoring traffic lights, and a few people sprinting toward some imaginary finish line until they were out of our sight. Sirens in the distance, police, ambulance, fire, but also the ones they blast when a tornado touches down. We hadn't noticed the air-raid sirens because our TV must've been too loud.

The bell above the door of the hardware store rang when we entered, which was annoying as fuck if you ask us, but John the hardware guy didn't pay any mind because he had his bug eyes superglued to the tiny TV on the back counter, watching *Purging after Purging*. He had his elbows propped on the counter, head in his hands.

You getting a load of this? he said. He didn't move at all, kept his eyes roving the screen. We said, We've seen what's going on, and we're here to prepare ourselves. Prepare yourselves for what? he said. Again, he didn't move. For what's about to happen to us, we said. Just grab whatever, he said, and waved us away with his free hand. We saluted him for his good faith in us and walked the aisles, searching for what could protect us from the coming onslaught. We sifted through bins of nuts and bolts, screws and nails, our hands becoming pasty. John yelled that people were flocking to churches—Christian ones—but he thought they were morons, that it was too late to fix the problem. We agreed but didn't say anything, continuing to peruse the store for something useful against a wielder of weather, the elements, the mind. John called us idiots when we said we were absolutely positively certain that a wood-handled rake and a wood-handled broom were, by far, the weapons with which we would feel most comfortable confronting the beasts exploring and honing their newfound abilities.

Out on the street, the sirens still blaring, we saw a few people sprinting toward the nearest church, First Southern Baptist, next to the fireworks store. On the marquee:

IF YOU WOULD SHUT UP,  
YOU COULD HEAR GOD'S VOICE

The lights were on, and when we squinted we saw through the windows that the pews looked full. We headed that direction to make more sense of the matter. During the walk, clutching our weaponry as if a threat could present itself at any time, we talked about the logic behind flocking to churches in the wake of Jesus's appearance. Wouldn't you know if you were a true believer because you'd be able to do something extraordinary like freeze time or people? And, we asked ourselves, if He'd already

blessed the believers with abilities, would He really let others into His fold after the fact? We determined that seeking solace in churches was stupid, for it was too late for any of us to be saved. There was no longer the opportunity for salvation—only judgment. The sirens beckoned, but for what we were not sure.

We knocked on the white double doors of the church, itself a beacon of white brick interrupted every few feet by antique wavy glass windows that warped the view but were quite beautiful. Unfortunately, we feared they would be broken in the coming days. We almost knocked again, but before our knuckles touched the wood, we heard the locking mechanism unlatch, and the door inched open, revealing a man's face, a man in his sixties, we surmised from his wrinkles and thin gray hair. A big mole to the left of his nose conjured *Uncle Buck* in our minds, and we forced ourselves to refrain from making a comment regarding quarters and rats gnawing things off faces.

Can I help you? he asked, his voice deep and rough, phlegmy. His blue eyes gave us the once-over. We came to hear God's voice, we said. With our weapons we pointed toward the marquee a few yards away, and for a moment we felt biblical, as if the handles of our weapons were staffs, those of Moses and Aaron. He looked from us to the marquee to us. Are you here to pray? he said. We glanced at ourselves and shrugged. Maybe, we said. What are those for? he said, and nodded at our weapons. A violent gust of wind kicked up and caused us to lose our footing and stumble. The man stuck his neck out a little farther and looked right and left, perhaps checking for the creator of the wind, before he told us, Come in, quickly.

Inside the church, the man locked the door and walked through the foyer into the sanctuary. We followed him, noting that the church was almost full, its visitors mostly elderly, though there were a few families scattered. The elderly were dressed as they would be on Sunday morning, in suits and formal dresses, but the younger people were not; in jeans and T-shirts, they appeared as if they hadn't had much lead-time before leaving for their destination. Prior to entering the sanctuary, we'd heard the low whispers of worried people, but many were silent with their heads bowed—praying, we assumed, or pondering the unsettling course of events. Following our entrance, however, the whispering ceased, and most of the congregation craned their necks to inspect us. We supposed that we were not whom they had hoped to see. We expected the man to tell us where to go, but he left our side, returning to what must've been his original position in a pew near the front with a woman and three boys, whose faces matched the man's but whose hair color matched the woman's.

We were left to our own devices, and so we chose to sit near the back of the sanctuary in a pew that held a few more spots, depending of course on the girth of those who would attempt to sit there. To our chagrin, the empty seats were in the middle of the

pew, which meant that we had to squeeze past many people. We shifted to get comfortable, the wood groaning beneath us, and looked to our right.

Our pewmate to the right we christened the Bullfrog because of his overflowing neck fat, somewhere in which hid a chin. Or many. Or maybe the whole was the chin. Or maybe the chin had ceased to exist. Instead, maybe he was just face, which consisted of a small, round nose and tiny eyes behind big, thick glasses. He had his head bowed, his eyes closed in prayer or sleep, and his white hair was slicked back to, we imagined, prevent it from falling into his face. His suit and tie looked dated. He had his hands linked over his protruding belly, and every rise and fall of his breath stretched the white collared shirt where his sport coat had fallen away. The lot of us were experiencing one of the most important moments in human history—if not *the* most important—but we mutually decided, albeit silently, to leave him to his rest. If he were asleep for an event such as this, of what importance could it be to him?

Our pewmate to the left we dubbed Madame. She was elderly, as well, but her dress—a lengthy red number—belied her age, and she was accessorized to the hilt in matching hat, earrings, necklace, and purse. Her bright red lipstick distracted from her abundant wrinkles, but only momentarily and, to be truthful, unsuccessfully. Because we couldn't resist staring at those wrinkles, the valleys and gulleys and canyons and fissures and crevasses and chasms. The lines of experience and age, death's ever-encroaching hold on the human body. As we watched her, she never averted her eyes or attention from the pulpit. There was no reason to watch the pulpit, or at least none we could surmise, because it was vacant, but she stared nevertheless. As tempting as it was to poke the Bullfrog with the handles of our rake and broom, to stir him from sleep with a friendly yet playful nudge, we agreed that our best course was to strike up a conversation with Madame. Onward, we told ourselves.

What, we whispered to her, is everybody doing here? She turned and looked at us, flinching as if we weren't supposed to be there or, otherwise, as if she expected to be faced with the Bullfrog and the Bullfrog alone. Excuse me? she said, and brought a hand to her necklace, fingering it with her thumb and forefinger. If everybody here is doomed, then what is everybody doing here? we repeated. *No one* is doomed. She said it as if even the idea repulsed her, the thought of her among the damned. There's still a chance then? To which she said, Why of course. Those who seek Him will find Him. Proverbs 8:17. We turned to face the front and then checked on the Bullfrog—yes, still asleep—and resumed our twiddling of thumbs.

It didn't make sense, really, that hope remained for the doomed if the saved had already been granted powers. Unless, it occurred to us, time remained for the doomed to become saved and, therefore, be blessed with the gifts bestowed upon the saved earlier in the day. Then again, was humanity so stupid as to see the end but convince

itself that it wasn't the end? That all the time we'd had to repent—thousands of years—wasn't enough? We'd read the book, at the moment undoubtedly buried somewhere in our closet, and we knew that faith is believing in what you cannot see. Romans 8:24.

Before long, we became lost in our minds to the extent that, at first, we failed to notice the man who stood up from his pew, opened his mouth, and emitted water as if a dam had burst.

Though time slowed for us as the water came forth—it was difficult to believe, nearly cinematic—the effect was immediate. The force was like a firehose, drowning those nearby whose age prevented them from breathing well in the first place, let alone surviving the blunt trauma of the relentless, unforgiving blast. The man pivoted a full three hundred and sixty degrees to drench us all. We were close enough that the water actually hurt, so we abandoned the pew and lay on the wet carpet, squeezed between other bodies whose fates were, apparently, similar to our own. The screaming subsided, replaced by the sound of a hard rain—a rainstorm, perhaps—that monopolized our sense of hearing. While we contemplated our next course of action, clutching the rake and broom as a potential last resort, a shallow pool accumulated around us. We thought the man intended to drown us, and we had neither the time nor the resources to build an ark, so we crawled toward the closest window, pushing bodies aside in the watery waste until we could reach the windowpanes with our weapons. The first jab of the broom shattered a pane, which we followed up with a jab from the rake, shattering another. Take this, we said. Quietly, however, so he couldn't hear. We broke each square this way until the bottom half of the window was free of glass. The top half required us to stand.

Upon standing, we bashed at the top half of the window, shattering it in no more than two swings. The noise was minimal in contrast to the water, but we thought that maybe we'd been seen, so we turned to check. The blast punched us in the chest, a continual merciless punching, and banged our heads against the window frame. We struggled to breathe amid the deluge, but before we could formulate a plan to escape it, we were airborne, tumbling, landing face down on hard, wet earth. We coughed and coughed and coughed, vomited and hocked and spat water into the grass, the soggy dirt, and turned to lean against the building. Air was ours. We breathed it in, felt its power, its strength. Soon we had to crawl to safety as the water poured out the window, and it was then we realized we'd been disarmed. The rake and broom were gone.

Our feet found us and pushed us upright. We placed a hand on the building's rough bricks to steady ourselves and made our way to the front of the church. At the corner, we waited. Minutes. Not long. Too long. Not long enough. The doors opened, and the

water rushed out onto the sidewalk and lawn, a river that would soon make its way underground, and carried with it a few waterlogged bodies and orphaned clothing. We edged closer to confront the perpetrator. It's what our heroes would've done. They would've fought. To the death. The man himself emerged, but we remained steadfast in our resolve. He was drenched, too, his brown suit and tie dark and disheveled. His wrinkled face and balding head were shiny with water, reflecting light from the porch lights and marquee.

He swiveled to face us, and the water continued to press on past his legs and onto the earth. We were unarmed, but we thought it was just as well. How many are you? he asked. We looked at each other. Two, we said. We said, one. You have endured enough punishment, he said. He turned and walked away, through the church's lawn into the parking lot of the fireworks store and beyond. We watched, we admit, until he vanished from our vision. We looked at each other again. We had not been punished. No, we had been blessed. Man cannot live alone, so God saw fit to provide him with a companion. Genesis 2:18.

We walked to the front doors and peered in. Several people were moaning, clutching various parts while rolling back and forth on the watery carpet. Others remained still, silent. We set forth to help them, to do good work, to do the work of the good. Me as Batman, him as Robin. No, him as Batman, me as Robin. A team, nonetheless.

Note: Jesus's dialogue is taken from the New American Standard Bible.

Jason Jordan holds a Ph.D. in Creative Writing: Fiction from Ohio University, where he is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow. His debut novel, *On the Merits of Fascism: A Manifesto Novel*, is forthcoming from Keyhole Press in late 2017. He also edits the online literary magazine *decomp*, found at [decompmagazine.com](http://decompmagazine.com), and listens, exclusively, to HEAVY METAL. Find out more about him than you want to know at [jasonleejordan.com](http://jasonleejordan.com).